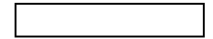




Director of Central Intelligence

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**AFGHANISTAN: Kabul at Risk**

*The government faces challenges from opposition forces in the next several weeks that could threaten its survival. Its loss to Taliban of Herat—on which it has relied for ammunition and fuel in previous battles—weakened its military capabilities, and it now confronts the potential for opposition offensives from the west, north, and east.*

— Taliban says President Rabbani must resign or it will storm the city.

*Despite its isolation, Kabul appears adequately positioned to weather the coming attacks.* De facto Defense Minister Masood, Afghanistan's most capable military leader, has commanded troops in the city since the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, and his forces have repelled several assaults. *A coordinated attack by Taliban, Dostam, and Hikmatyar probably would overwhelm his defenses, but the prospects for such cooperation are remote.*

— [redacted] Taliban's success in the west is encouraging it to remain independent. In any case, Dostam and Hikmatyar's forces are too far from Kabul to aid a Taliban attack on short notice. [redacted]

*Even if Kabul fends off Taliban, it faces the prospects of starvation during the winter.* It depends on overland access routes to stockpile fuel and food each winter, and opposition forces now control all major routes to the city.

— Shortages may be worse than last year because comparatively secure conditions during the summer encouraged an influx of refugees to return to the capital. [redacted]

— *Aircraft have supplied Kabul in past winters, but Dostam's threat to shoot down aircraft that enter Afghan airspace without his authorization will discourage flights.* Kabul is opening two alternative air routes over government-controlled areas in the northeast. [redacted]

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